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THE FUTURE OF THE SOVIET UNION AS A SEA POWER

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1 March 1966

ABSTRACT OF TITLE OF PAPER

Russia, primarily a land power throughout its history, has exhibited a consistent aggressive policy of expansion. Sea power as an instrument of national power in international politics was essentially ignored through lack of appreciation of its potential by most Russian rulers. The masters of the Soviet Union continued these basic Russian policies through the first 25 years of communist rule.

Since World War II a dramatic awareness of the influence of sea power in the world arena has developed among Soviet leaders. This new outlook on sea power has resulted in a four-pronged offense which in 20 years has produced almost fantastic results.

The Soviet Union has constructed a navy second only to the United States and is gradually increasing its operations to a world wide scope. The one drawback to this fleet is its lack of balance and therefore its inability to project major Soviet power overseas if opposed by a first class sea power.

The merchant fleet of the USSR has grown from a minuscule role in world trade to one challenging the United States and Great Britain.

Soviet fishing activities are now conducted on a world wide, year-round basis and threaten to dominate the entire ocean fishing industry.

To support its maritime activities the Soviets are conducting a study of the ocean environment unequalled by any other nation.

Continuation of present policies for the next 20 years will bring the Soviet Union to a position to challenge the United States as the major sea power of the world.

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INTRODUCTION

"Who rules East Europe commands the Heartland; Who rules the Heartland commands the World-Island; Who rules the World Island commands the World."¹

These lines by the imminent British geographer and historian Mackinder are oft-quoted and are well known. Another passage from Mackinder of equal or greater importance is much less well-known:

What if the Great Continent, the whole World-Island or a large part of it, were at some future time to become a single and united base of sea-power? Would not the other insular bases be outbuilt as regards ships and outmanned as regards seamen? Their fleets would no doubt fight with all the heroism begotten of their histories but the end would be fated.²

Is the World Island today becoming a hostile base of sea-power?

The Soviet Union commands the Heartland and has shown a growing interest in and awareness of sea power as an instrument of national power. This fascination with the sea has taken overt form in almost frenzied maritime activity in the past 20 years.

The purpose of this paper is to examine the growth of sea power and its future position in the Soviet Union

¹Right Honourable Sir Halford J. Mackinder, Democratic Ideals and Reality A Study in the Politics of Reconstruction, (New York: Henry Holt and Company 1942), p. 70.

²Mackinder, p. 70.

with an objective of determining the extent to which this power may develop as a threat to the United States.

A scrutiny will be made of the Soviet Union with regard to the six basic elements of sea power to determine the advantages and disadvantages accruing to the Soviet Union. An historical review of Russian, Russian Empire and Soviet Union maritime activities, including the intense activity of the recent past, will indicate the purpose of this maritime activity and portend the future.

PART I

THE ELEMENTS OF SEA POWER

Alfred Thayer Mahan has established the elements which are a major determinate of the sea power potential of a nation. These elements; geographical position, physical conformation, extent of territory, number of population, character of the people and character of the government are still valid in describing the essential elements of a sea power nation.¹ A nation cannot possess optimum conditions in each of these elements; however, minimum standards must be met to establish itself as a sea power. The advantages and disadvantages found in each must be weighed to determine the overall balance in evaluating the inherent sea power capability.

¹Captain Alfred Thayer Mahan, D.C.L., LL.D., United States Navy, The Influence of Sea Power Upon History 1660-1783, (New York: Hill and Wang 1957), p. 22-77.

CHAPTER I

PHYSICAL POSITION, CONFORMATION AND TERRITORY

It may be pointed out, in the first place, that if a nation be so situated that it is neither forced to defend itself by land nor induced to seek extension of its territory by way of the land, it has, by the very unity of its aim directed upon the sea, an advantage as compared with a people one of whose boundaries is continental.¹

Thus Mahan enunciated the advantage accruing to nations like England or Japan, in contrast to nations as France or the Netherlands, to be able to concentrate its energies on the sea.

Within the parameters of this criteria it appears that the Soviet Union with extensive land boundaries to the west and to the south is disadvantaged by a necessary division of attention and effort. History tends to support this view with the record of centuries of enmity of Russia with Germany to the west, Turkey to the southwest and China along a long common border to the south. This is further strengthened by the record of centuries of almost continuous Russian expansion at the expense of its land neighbors. Mr. R. E. Walters has advanced a postulate which reduces the essentiality of this geographical position factor as it relates to sea power, at least in the minds of Soviet leaders.

¹Captain Alfred Thayer Mahan, D.C.L., LL.D., United States Navy, The Influence of Sea Power Upon History 1660-1783, (New York: Hill and Wang 1957), p. 25.

. . . it would seem that the Soviet Union has a new self-confidence in its military posture which seems to be an interesting point in itself. It would seem that the source of this self-confidence stems from the Soviet investment in intermediate and short-range missiles -- 'the shield' . . . It would appear that the Soviets gained a renewed self-confidence not by a radioactive moat in being, but through the threat of creating a radioactive strip should they be threatened.

It would therefore follow that the Soviets have created a potential channel, much like the English Channel, which now could allow them to direct their energies to other things. . . .

Nuclear weapons have seemingly negated the possibility of any blitzkrieg similar to the type of attack used by the Germans. It therefore seems to follow that the Soviets are not likely to move in a landward direction, nor do they have any great need to do do.²

Not only is the Soviet Union the largest nation in the world, it has the longest sea frontier, approximately 27,000 miles of sea coast as compared to 10,000 miles of land borders. This extensive coastal boundary is washed by two oceans and 12 seas including the Pacific-Bering Sea on the eastern extremity and the Baltic Sea some 7,000 miles to the west.³ Located on this extensive sea coast are 27 major ports of which the most important are Leningrad, Archangelsk, Riga, Murmansk, Odessa, Baku and Vladivostock.⁴

²R. E. Walters, The Soviet Union and the Arctic Ocean, (Annapolis: Academic Fellowship 1965, p. 5-6.

³S. S. Balzak, et al., Translated from the Russian by Robert M. Hankin and Olga Adler Titelbaum, Economic Geography of the USSR, (New York: The MacMillan Company 1949), p. 1-6.

⁴The Europa Yearbook 1965, (London: Europa Publications Limited), I, p. 998.

This geographic conformation appears initially to provide the USSR with almost unlimited opportunity for sea power exploitation; however, a number of factors tend to diminish the apparent advantages.

Access to or egress from much of the sea coast of the Soviet Union is subject to control or interference by nations whose interests are at variance with the USSR. Black and Caspian Seas access to the high seas depend upon the goodwill of Turkey for transit of the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles, this goodwill has historically not been present. Primary access of the Baltic Sea to the Atlantic Ocean depends upon use of the Kategat and Skagerrak which is subject to the control of Denmark, Sweden and Germany, none of whom are traditional friends of Russia. The eastern sea coast is bordered by the Sea of Japan, Sea of Okhotsk and the Bering Sea where access to the Pacific Ocean is exposed to serious opposition by Japan and the United States. The development and expansion of the Soviet inland waterway system has somewhat alleviated the restrictions on egress from and access to the inland seas; however, it is a slow and tedious task to move ocean shipping through these waterways.

The only undisputed Soviet access to the open ocean is in the vast Arctic Ocean area which includes the White, Barents, Kara, Laptev and East Siberian Seas. There she has

15,000 miles of coastline and is challenged only by nature, which is in itself a formidable challenge. Only the southern tip of the White Sea dips below the 65th parallel which is the latitude of Iceland and central Alaska. Only about 2,000 miles of this Arctic coast is south of the 70th parallel and this is in European Russia and opens into the Barents Sea from which a transit into the Atlantic Ocean requires rounding North Cape at 72 degrees north. This arctic area is characterised by ice, fog, high winds and rough seas, months of darkness, a sparsely populated and economically backward supporting land mass with poor internal communications - not a prepossessing prospect for sea power development. However, the importance of the Arctic is apparent when it is realized that this is not only the sole undisputed access to the high seas but, "The Arctic Ocean represents the natural unifying factor for the Soviet Union",⁵ and the contiguous land mass although largely undeveloped is extremely rich in natural resources. It is a continuous water route joining the Far East to European Russia. The north-east passage was a dream of Peter the Great and has been the object of increasing effort by Russia since the middle of the 18th century.

The size of the Soviet Union, the vast distances separating its major sea frontiers and the restricted

⁵Walters, p. 7.

passages permitting sea communications between these far-flung areas denies to the Soviets an ease of concentration of force or ready access by sea to the resources of the vast empire. This disadvantage was well demonstrated during the Russo-Japanese War 1904-05 when reinforcements from the Baltic required months to reach the Pacific theater and the Black Sea Fleet was totally ineffective because of inability to egress from the Black Sea. Again in World War II the magnitude of this problem was emphasized by the massive effort required of Great Britain and the United States to move supplies into the Soviet Union via the only open sea route, the far north passage to Murmansk. Throughout the maritime history of Russia these factors have seriously limited the ability to make consistent maritime progress. The gigantic energy expended in improving navigation of the North-East passage and of the inland waterways has brought an increased ability for intra-sea movement and has somewhat alleviated but has not solved the basic problem.

Conversely the wide-spread distribution of Soviet Union sea bases creates a requirement for an enemy to disperse its forces over thousands of miles and in several seas to counter Soviet naval forces. Similarly Soviet commercial sea interests can spread into all of the maritime areas of the world from its own bases.

"Thus, the USSR has diverse natural conditions and

natural riches such as are possessed by no other country in the world."⁶ This feeling of self-sufficiency has in the past, with a few exceptions, caused the rulers to depreciate the value of sea power. Generally the only sea power considered significant was naval force and this basically as an instrument to support the land army. However, as will be discussed in Chapter X the post World War II leaders of the Soviet Union have reappraised the value of sea power to the USSR.

⁶Balzak, p. 102.

CHAPTER II

THE PEOPLE AND THE GOVERNMENT

"The Russians are still a primitive and vigorous race, a formidable compound of European with Mongolian, grown in mere numbers from about 36,000,000 in 1800 to 170,000,000 at the present time, including all the forty-six lesser nations whom Russia now comprises (and who speak sixty-one different languages)."¹

Since 1947 the population of the Soviet Union has continued to grow and in 1964 stood at some 226,000,000 with an annual growth rate of 1.4% for the previous four years. Thus it continues as a vigorous, literate (98.5%) race not yet sufficient in numbers to develop the full potential of their nation but growing at a healthy rate.

Of the total Soviet Union population about 55% are Russians while the remainder are of the nationalities absorbed over the past five centuries.² Admiral E. Bjorklund of the Royal Swedish Navy has stated that 40% of the inhabitants of the Soviet Union prefer other language than Russian.³

¹Kennedy, A. I. M.C., "The Expansion of Russia", Quarterly Review, January 1947, p. 4-5.

²"The Soviet Union". Britannica Book of the Year 1965. p. 830.

³Bjorklund, E. "Russia's Feet of Clay". Army, March 1963, p. 42.

The greatest demographic weakness in the Soviet Union is the lack of homogeneousness of the people and the presence of a large dissident segment of the population.

The basic strength of the Soviet Union rests in the 125,000,000 Russians; thus, the origin and characteristics of this people will be examined in some detail.

The Russian people, as an ethnic group, had their beginning in the country around Moscow a minor river town. In the ninth century this area was inhabited by Finnish people of a forest economy who had drifted in from the northeast (modern Siberia) and the agriculture society Slavs from the region of the Pripet Marshes to the Southwest. These were poor, scattered, peaceful savages who were joined in the ninth century by Variagians or Folk of Rus. The Rus were Scandinavians, for the most part Swedish, who made their appearance upon the river trade-routes of the plains. They were men of great physical courage, berserk tempers and possessed the elements of social life. They stayed to become overlords of the towns and gave the area their name - Rus.⁴

Between the tenth and thirteenth centuries the wandering Turkish clans came into the area in large numbers. They blended with the Rus and Slavs and brought additional

⁴Harold Lamb, The March of Muscovy, (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc. 1948), p. 9-15.

vitality and a basic restlessness.

Early in the thirteenth century occurred an event whose influence is important in attempting to understand the Russian people of today - the coming of the Golden Horde.

The Mongols or Tatars swept out of the far eastern steppes like an apparition from another world. They reached the line of the Danube, raiding, pillaging and plundering before retiring to the area they intended to occupy. To the Tatars there were three zones; the first zone of Poland, Hungary and Germany where a scorched earth policy of total destruction was executed; the subjected zone between the Dnieper and the Volga rivers which was only lightly occupied and where tribute was required of the people to avoid raiding; and the occupied zone east of the Volga where the Mongols allied with the former occupants. Moscow lay near the center of the second or subjected zone. The people of Rus could not unite to offer effective resistance and the defenses of Moscow were so feeble the town got little attention from the invaders. Most of the more advanced towns, Riazan, Vladimir and Kiev resisted and were destroyed.

The succeeding two centuries of Tatar control had a profound effect on the development of the people of Rus. They were first subjected to inflexible authority but gradually the Princes of Muscovy learned to adapt to their

masters and became the agents of the Mongols. As subjects and agents the princes traveled frequently to Sarai, the seat of Mongol power; they became accustomed to the ways of the Horde and many married Tatar women. The Russians were required to provide conscripts for the Tatar armies where they learned war under skilled commanders, and absorbed Tatar discipline and military efficiency.

A century and a half of quiescence in the area about Moscow left the Tatars free to raid and pillage the people of the West. This allowed the "center" area to become more prosperous and the Moscow princes to become more powerful. They were protected by the Mongol army from attack by their neighbors and as collectors of the Tatar tribute wielded considerable power over the people.

The most important result of two centuries of Mongol rule was an insulation of the people from the West. In isolation from the West the people absorbed the blood and much of the ways of the Horde. An independent, crafty, suspicious people were evolving from this secluded position.

"Everywhere the swamps and forests of Great Russia of the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries confronted the settler with a thousand unforeseen risks, difficulties, and hardships".⁵

⁵V. O. Kluchevsky, Translated by C. J. Hogarth, A History of Russia, (London: J. M. Dent and Company Limited 1911), I, p. 218.

"All this bred in him resourcefulness in the face of minor perils and difficulties and inured him to patient wrestling with hardship and misfortune."⁶

"Nature there so often makes sport of even the best-laid agricultural plans that the Great Russian peasant soon grows inured to disappointment, and even comes to take a pleasure in pitting himself against her whims, on the off chance of beating her. This characteristic trait in the psychology of the Great Russian is summarised in his oft-repeated catchword yavos - 'perhaps'.⁷

During the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries as the power of the Mongols faded the population took three separate views of the Muscovite ruler and his domain.

In the first place, the people came to look upon the Prince as a model steward and administrator, as well as a man capable of maintaining territorial peace and civil order in his dominions, and upon his Principality as the source whence a new system of territorial relations originated of which the first outcome was the establishment of absolute internal and external security. In the second place, the people looked upon the Muscovite Prince as their popular leader in the struggles of Rus with external foes, and upon Moscow as the source of the first popular victories gained over the treacherous Lithuanians and the 'raw-flesh-eating' Tartars. Lastly, Northern Rus saw in the Muscovite Prince the 'eldest son' of the Russian Church. . . . Such, at the middle of the fifteenth century, was the status finally acquired by the ruler, who, but a century and a half ago, had begun his career as a petty robber waiting to despoil his neighbors from the vantage-ground of a petty

⁶Kluchevsky, p. 218.

⁷Kluchevsky, p. 219.

corner of Rus.⁸

Ivan The Terrible 1533-1584 was the first ruler of a Russian nation. "What came in his time, and what has endured under all stress, was the structure of a Russian nation."⁹

However, long before Ivan came on the scene a pattern emerged which has continued for more than five centuries - expansion and encroachment on her neighbors. As early as the beginning of the 14th century the rulers of Moscow, by usury and trickery, wrested land from the circle of princes around them. "Peasants began to call them gatherers of the lands."¹⁰ By the middle of the 16th century Russia had spread to the northeast and absorbed all the land to the White Sea.

In the period 1580-1648 Russia pushed from the Urals to the Pacific, acquiring more than 4,500,000 square miles of territory from the weak, hospitable Siberian tribes.¹¹

In the 13 year period, 1847-1860, Nicholas Muraviev, governor-general of Eastern Siberia conducted a war of nerves against the Chinese which would have been a credit

⁸Kluchevsky, p. 292-293.

⁹Lamb, p. 198.

¹⁰Lamb, p. 53.

¹¹William G. Bray, Russian Frontiers From Muscovy to Krushchev, (Indianapolis: Bobs-Merrill 1963), p. 46-50.

to Stalin or Krushchev. This campaign was consummated in the Treaty of Peking by which Russia acquired 400,000 square miles of China territory including Vladivostok and 1,500 miles of Pacific coast. This without the loss of a single Russian life!¹²

The history of Russia is replete with evidence of a consistent policy of expansion conducted by a strong central government. Or as expressed by the British historian A. I. Kennedy: "For five centuries Russians have been seeking a final frontier which they never find."¹³ The short history of the Soviet Union with its acquisition of territory including Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Sakhalin Islands and the eastern portion of Finland as well as the post World War II designs on Iran, Turkey, Greece and the Italian colonies in North Africa demonstrates a continuation of this long-standing policy.

¹²Bray, p. 51.

¹³Kennedy, p. 4-5.

PART II

SEA POWER, THE NAVY

One element to be considered in measuring a nation's sea power is the naval force it has available for employment in the arena of world politics. Not just strength of men and ships, both absolute and relative, but the imponderables such as tradition, historical success or failure and the national leaders' concept of employment of naval force.

CHAPTER III

THE RUSSIAN NAVY 1695-1796

The navies of major naval powers as England, The Netherlands, France, Japan and the United States have been created from a background of sea activity and experience - fishing and trading - and were established to protect the nation's commercial interest on the sea and to protect the coastal boundary.

In the year 1695, which can be used as the birth of the Russian navy, Russia had no sea commerce, no sea ports and very little sailing experience on other than rivers and lakes. The first fleet was built on the Don and moved down the river to attack the Turkish fort of Azov in 1695. This attack was not successful but the following year Azov was captured. At the same time another fleet which had been built on the river Desna was moved 500 miles to the mouth of the Dnieper to attack Turkish shipping. This fleet of over 50 ships was moved through shallow inland streams and dragged overland from one stream to the next. With this inland-built navy there started a contest with the Turks for control of the Black Sea and free passage of Russia from the Black to the Mediterranean which continues to this day.

In 1703 another inland fleet pushed its way to the sea to challenge the supremacy of Sweden in the Baltic Sea. The Swedish fort of Nyenschantz was captured in 1703 and shortly

thereafter the Russian fleet participated in its first naval engagement. The far-reaching results of the Great Northern War of 1703-25 were: (1) reduction of Sweden to a permanent status as a second rank power, (2) elevation of Russia to first rank power status in the Baltic region, (3) acquisition of territory on the Baltic by Russia. Russia acquired Livonia, Estonia, Ingria and part of eastern Finland and has never been satisfied without this area since. The most significant coastal acquisition was the region of the mouth of the Neva river. On the site of the captured Swedish fort of Nyenschantz Peter the Great built St. Petersburg (Petrograd, Leningrad) and at the mouth of the river on the Viborg peninsula the fortress and naval base of Kronstadt. Peter the Great said "Petersburg is the window on the Baltic, Viborg is the shutter to that window."¹

This beginning of the Russian navy in spite of seeming unsurmountable obstacles was achieved through the dynamic personality of Peter the Great, Emperor of Russia 1672-1725, who is generally known as the Father of the Russian navy. Peter directed and closely supervised the construction of ships; sent his nobles to England to be trained in navigation and shipbuilding; engaged British, Danish and Dutch naval officers to officer his fleet and personally

¹Peter the Great, quoted in Mairin Mitchell, The Maritime History of Russia 1848-1948, (London: Sidgwick and Jackson Limited 1949), p. 303.

participated in fleet operations in the Baltic. "Peter was almost 'British' in his maritime outlook."²

Thus the development of the Russian navy and the establishment of Russia as a first-class sea power, at least in the north, was realized because of the force and vision of one man, Peter the Great; not through the pressure of natural forces as was the case of the "maritime" states.

Peter's immediate naval interest lay in the north. It was the Baltic that received his personal attention, it was here he, the emperor, served as Rear Admiral *nom de guerre* Mihailov under his commander-in-chief Admiral Feodor Apraxin.³

"St. Petersburg was built to give Peter his western window, and from his 'city on stilts' he was to look far out over the west, where he felt Russia's destiny lay."⁴

Peter also appreciated the significance of the Arctic Ocean area and the importance of a north-east passage and engaged the great Danish explorer Vitus Bering to conduct explorations in this area. Although it was not until some 150 years later, 1879-1880, Baron Nils Nordenshiold in his

²Mairin Mitchell, The Maritime History of Russia 1848-1948, (London: Sidgwick and Jackson Limited 1948), p. 84.

³David Woodward, The Russians at Sea, (London: William Kimber and Company Limited 1965), p. 12.

⁴Mitchell, p. 67.

Vega was to complete the first passage to the Bering Strait to Peter belongs the credit for initiating Russian interest in the Arctic.

The Russian navy's first seaward thrust was into the Black Sea and in spite of setbacks and limited success against the Turks Peter had an abiding feeling of the importance of a southern sea exit to Russian ambitions and continued attempts to establish a position on the Black Sea throughout his life. The will of Peter, published in 1775 designated this as the road to world domination.

To approach as near as possible to Constantinople and India. Whoever governs there will be the true sovereign of the world. Consequently excite continual wars, not only in Turkey, but in Persia. Establish dockyards on the Black Sea, seize upon little pieces near the sea as well as on the Baltic, which is doubly necessary for the attainment of our project. And in the decadence of Persia, penetrate as far as the Persian Gulf⁵

After the death of Peter the Great the navy lost favor and declined because of the loss of the dominant factor in its development - a ruler dedicated to expansion through sea power. A succession of rulers from 1725 to 1762 ignored sea power as an instrument of national strength and reduced the navy to an auxiliary of the army.

The ascension of Catherine the Great in 1762 instilled new life in Russian maritime activity. "If Peter the Great

⁵Will of Peter the Great, Clause IX, quoted in William G. Bray, Russian Frontiers From Muscovy to Krushchev, (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Company 1963), p. 63.

was the father of the Russian Navy Catherine the Great was its mother."⁶

Catherine turned her attention to the Balkans and commenced a concerted effort to establish a naval position in the Black Sea. Her reign witnessed the first serious move of a Russian fleet out of the enclosed seas and a thrust into the Mediterranean. In 1769 a fleet of seven battle-ships and eight smaller ships were sent from the Baltic to the Mediterranean to join with the British in action against the Turkish fleet. Although the Russian fleet was not particularly effective the combined fleets destroyed the Turkish Mediterranean fleet.

Another series of actions during the Russo-Turkish War 1769-1774 resulted in the defeat of the Turkish Black Sea fleet and establishment of Russia as a naval power in the Black Sea.

The efforts of Sweden to regain supremacy in the Baltic were defeated and with the start of the Napoleonic Wars Catherine in 1795 sent the Baltic fleet to join the British in the North Sea. The following year the Black Sea fleet was sent into the Mediterranean via the Turkish straits.

The death of Catherine in 1796 saw the Russian navy in a dominant position in the Baltic Sea and challenging

⁶Mitchell, p. 113.

for supremacy in the Black Sea. It had established a capability to operate outside these enclosed seas for the first time.

CHAPTER IV

EXPANSION AND CONSOLIDATION 1796-1848

Paul I, who ascended the throne at the death of Catherine, had little enduring impact on Russian sea power. His tyrannical pedantry was too much for even the Russians who were not unaccustomed to Royal caprice. After less than five years on the throne Paul was strangled in bed by his own officers. He did make one lasting visible contribution to the Russian navy; during one of his less lucid periods he designed a new uniform for his navy officers. For the next hundred years the Russian navy was to be the only one in the world whose officers wore green uniforms.

The end of the 18th and first half of the 19th centuries saw Russia reach a level of naval activity in the Mediterranean unmatched since that time. It also saw Russia frequently shifting allegiance in the Napoleonic Wars.

The ties with England and the Royal Navy, established and fostered by Peter the Great, determined Russian naval activity in general. As a member of the anti-French coalition she was allied with the perennial enemy Turkey. This opened the Turkish Straits to passage of the Russian fleet through alliance instead of conquest.

The Black Sea fleet was quick to take advantage of its new freedom and of Napoleon's occupation with his

campaigns in Egypt. The Ionian Islands were seized from the French and a Russian-controlled republic established. Corfu and Montenegro were captured and naval bases established. Paul I accepted his election as the grand master of the Knights of Malta and had every intention of becoming the actual ruler of that strategic island.

The British suspected that the true objective of Russia was to gain a solid and permanent position in the Mediterranean, not the defeat of Napoleon. Thus in 1800 Nelson captured Malta and there established a British base. Friend and enemy alike were alarmed by Russian advances in the Mediterranean.

British fear of a rising Russian bear contributed to worsening of relations within the anti-French alliance. The capture of Malta by Nelson and the lack of British support for Russian troops in the Netherlands influenced Paul to switch sides and bring Russia into an alliance with France against Britain in 1800. At this point Paul with a somewhat warped view of the long-range policies of expansion enunciated by Peter the Great sent the Don cossacks by land over unmapped territory and with no logistic support to invade distant British held India. The death of Paul shortly thereafter caused a cancellation of this fantastic move.¹

¹Nicholas V. Riasanovsky, A History of Russia, (New York: Oxford University Press 1963). p. 304.

Paul's successor, Alexander I, proclaimed Russian neutrality in the European conflict with Napoleon. This stated neutrality endured only a short time, Russia's long western boundary and economic and traditional ties with Great Britain dictated a return to the anti-French coalition in 1805. After rejoining the coalition Russia sent her Baltic fleet to the Mediterranean to join the British in operations against the French.

From Napoleon's defeat of the continental members of the coalition in 1806-07, "Russia emerged as the hegemon of much of eastern Europe and the only major power on the continent other than France."² This weakening of the other continental powers left Russia free to expand further in the Caucasus, wrest control of Finland from Sweden and continue expansion in North America.

In 1807 the Russian Baltic fleet operating in the Mediterranean blockaded the Dardanelles, engaged and defeated the Turkish fleet. After this action the Baltic fleet attempted to return home but the British fleet as a precautionary measure blockaded the Russian fleet when it stopped in the Tagus river to fuel. This fleet was then interned in British home waters until Britain and Russia were again allied in 1812.

Although Russia as a French ally was forced by

²Riasanovsky, p. 342.

Napoleon to participate in the continental blockade whereby commerce was denied between Great Britain and the continent the reduced Russian Baltic fleet was kept in check and largely dormant by the presence of a joint British-Swedish fleet in the Baltic. The Black Sea fleet was fully occupied with the Persian and Turkish fleets as the Russian land army extended its control of the Black Sea region.

The shotgun marriage of Russia to Napoleon's France was destined for early dissolution; this came in 1812 with the invasion of Russia by the Grande Armée. Contributing to the disunity was French opposition to the Russian bases in the eastern Mediterranean gained primarily at the expense of France in 1799 and the refusal of Napoleon to give the Russians a free hand in regard to Constantinople and the Turkish Straits. Napoleon said, "If ever Russia gets possession of Constantinople, then, with her flanks on the Baltic and the Bosphorus she will enslave Europe and Asia under the same yoke."³

The end of the Napoleonic Wars left the Baltic Sea fleet dominant in the area and theoretically in good condition. However, lack of appreciation by Alexander I of sea power as reflected by the defensive and auxiliary role assigned the fleet during the latter years of the Wars

³Napoleon, quoted in Mairin Mitchell, The Maritime History of Russia 1848-1948, (London: Sidgwick and Jackson Limited 1948). p. 122.

had initiated a steady deterioration in material and morale.

The 20 year post Napoleonic War period witnessed continued Russian pressure to consolidate its position in the Black Sea-Turkish Straits area. The Greek revolt against Turkey in 1827 sent a combined Russian-British-French fleet against the Turkish-Egyptian fleet and to a resounding victory at Navarino. However, the British and French refused to assist Russia in a planned exploitation of this victory with an attack on the Dardanelles. Russia's allies again demonstrated a fear of allowing the Russian bear to become too powerful and particularly of it gaining control of the Turkish Straits. The treaty of 1829 provided for opening the Straits to all merchant shipping.

In 1833 an Egyptian revolt against Turkey brought Russian aid for which Turkey paid by agreeing to close the Straits whenever Russia so requested and to allow no foreign warships (only Russian and Turkish) into the Black Sea. Russia attempted without success to parlay this assistance into a concession from Persia for a naval base on the Persian Gulf.

A Russian naval transport arrived at the mouth of the Amur river on the Gulf of Tartary in 1848 and there found an excellent harbor. The flag was raised over the first Pacific outlet for Russia and the fort was named Nikolaevsk. In response to a Chinese protest of the preemption of China

territory Tsar Nicholas retorted. "Where the Russian flag has once been hoisted, it must not be lowered."⁴

Although in the first half of the 19th century Russia made some gains in her sea power position, especially in the Black Sea-Mediterranean area, she was not able to fully exploit the opportunities presented. Her allies through mistrust and uncommon foresight were unwilling to permit Russian domination of the sea lines of communication vital to them.

This balking of Russian ambitions in the West is cited by many historians as the cause of the Russian push to the east and the Pacific. Be that fact or not the look to the east had commenced.

⁴Nicholas, quoted in William G. Bray, Russian Frontiers From Muscovy to Krushchev, (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Company 1963), p. 48.

CHAPTER V

DEVELOPMENT OF TECHNIQUES AND CONCEPTS 1849-1903

In the latter half of the 19th century the Russian navy was involved in two wars, the Crimean War 1853-56 and the Russo-Turkish War 1876-77, neither of which are particularly significant as naval conflicts. However, some notable naval developments were evident in these conflicts. The Battle of Sinope November 30, 1853 was the last fleet action between wooden ships and was the occasion for the first use of high-explosive shells by the Russian fleet. This resulted in the complete demolition of the Turkish fleet with small losses by Russia. Now the Russian fleet was unopposed and supreme in the Black Sea, but only until a combined British-French fleet entered the Black in support of Turkey. At this juncture the Russian fleet retired to its bases and left the sea to a fleet less powerful and operating far from its support bases. When the allied fleets attacked Sevastopol the Black Sea fleet was scuttled to block the entrance.

When a British-French fleet appeared in the Baltic the Russian fleet retired to Kronstadt and declined action. Here "torpedoes" (mines) were used to keep the allied fleet beyond gun range of the fleet in Kronstadt.

As a result of the Crimean War the Russians agreed to refrain from maintaining a fleet in the Black Sea.

Apparently almost two centuries of struggle to gain and maintain a dominant naval position in the Black Sea had gone down the drain primarily because of a reluctance to risk losses by committing the fleet to action.

Russian inability to counter the British fleet and a fear that Great Britain would shortly move against Russia's North American possessions caused her withdrawal from North America with the sale of Alaska in 1867.

The brother of Tsar Alexander II, Grand Duke Constantine, was appalled by the naval consequences of the Crimean War. He instituted a vigorous reorganization and rebuilding of the Baltic fleet, primarily ironclads and steam, and he insisted on thorough naval education. To offset the low morale caused by the Crimean War he sent the fleet in the 60s routinely visiting and operating outside the Baltic for the first time.

In 1870 Russia renounced the restrictions on maintaining a Black Sea fleet and commenced a Black Sea construction program. This was a unique force - fast merchant ships outfitted to carry torpedo boats (steam launches) armed with spar torpedoes, towed torpedoes and finally "fish torpedoes". This fleet saw action against the Turks almost immediately.

"Primitive though all this was the Russo-Turkish War can be described as the first torpedo war in our sense of the phrase, for the torpedoes used in the Crimean War and

the American Civil War were really either moored mines (in both wars) or explosive charges on spars (in the American Civil)."¹

The noted naval historian F. T. Jane has said: "with a scratch fleet of converted merchant ships and cockleshell torpedo boats using an untried weapon and developing tactics as they went the Russians were able to harass a Turkish fleet of 15 modern ironclads, sink or disable several and prevent the Turkish fleet from interfering with the land battle."²

Again a victorious Russia was in a position to gain control of the Turkish Straits and her troops were nearing Constantinople when British policy and the appearance of a British fleet from Cyprus checked further advance. Russia would not press her claims hard enough to bring about war with Britain and her sea power.

This frustration made a real impact on Alexander II and caused the launching of the first detailed and systematic plan for a wholesale increase in the Russian navy. "A 20-year construction program commencing in 1882 was to provide a fleet which, in alliance with that of France or

¹David Woodward, The Russians at Sea, (London: William Kimber and Company Limited 1965), p. 111.

²Jane quoted in David Woodward, The Russians at Sea, (London: William Kimber and Company Limited 1965), p. 112.

some other strong ally, might topple the British."³ This program departed somewhat from the commerce-raiding cruiser concept of the 1870s and provided a more balanced fleet including battleships.

Secrecy with regard to naval construction became an obsession with the Russians. This was to be their first "do-it-yourself" fleet, designed and built by Russians for the first time. The tale of the Rurik serves to show how ludicrous this secrecy became. The rumors concerning construction of Rurik developed this cruiser into a ship fast enough to escape any stronger foe and powerful enough to sink any ship that could catch her. Captain Wilmot, Royal Navy, wrote authoritatively of Rurik in 1892; "Under construction is a very large vessel of 10,500 tons, to be called 'Rurik', with a 10-in. belt, powerful armament, high speed, and large coal supply."⁴ Based on the rumor Great Britain hurriedly built two armoured cruisers even bigger, faster and more powerful than Rurik was reported to be. Rurik made her first public appearance at the naval review marking the opening of the Kiel Canal in 1893 - a full-rigged three-masted ship, 20 years out of date.⁴ A ship of sail in the age of steam!

³Woodward, p. 122.

⁴Captain S. Eardley-Wilmot, R. N., The Development of Navies, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons 1892), p. 259.

In spite of an apparent better grasp of sea power significance the Russians continued to show signs of unrealistic policies. The Black and Baltic Sea fleets were confined to port nine months of each year with only 25% of a crew on board; it was believed that a "fleet in being" although largely untrained and in mediocre material condition was equivalent to "sea power".

Under the watchful eyes of the British and French fleets the Russians continued to expand the Pacific fleet. Vladivostock was developed as a Russian naval base, the right to use Port Arthur, an ice-free port, as a naval base was coerced from China, and Darien was closed to all except Russian and Chinese ships. "Broadly it may be said that in China England sought trade, Russia territory. England wanted treaty ports for commerce, Russia huge areas to dominate politically, and eventual supremacy on the Pacific seaboard."⁵

Two Russian thrusts made into the Red Sea area in 1889 met with failure at the hands of the French and British. The fort of Sagallo in French Somaliland opposite British Aden was captured by a Russian force which was promptly ejected by General Orly. Concurrently Russia attempted to establish a colony in Ethiopia in order to threaten British sea communications with India. British

⁵Mairin Mitchell, The Maritime History of Russia 1848-1948, (London: Sidgwick and Jackson 1949), p. 173.

influence caused the Ethiopians to reject the effort.

At the turn of the century Russian Baltic and Black Sea fleets were strong on paper but ill-prepared for war. The Pacific fleet was steadily growing and was planned to equal the Japanese fleet in 1903. The British fleet had been withdrawn from the North Pacific waters to strengthen the home fleet against the growing German fleet. Great Britain in 1902 entrusted countering the Russian Pacific fleet to Japan. The treaty with Japan provided that if either Japan or Great Britain were at war with two or more countries the other would come to her aid.⁶

⁶Mitchell, p. 195.

CHAPTER VI

DEATH OF A FLEET AND RUSSIAN REACTION 1904-14

Russian policy of continued aggressiveness in the Far East was destined for a head-on collision with a Japan which was flexing the muscles of a modernized and eager army and navy. The conflict of interest, particularly the mutual desire to dominate the Korean peninsula, culminated in violence in the Russo-Japanese War 1904-05.¹

As noted previously the Russian Pacific fleet had gained a numerical strength roughly equal to the Japanese navy. However, it was handicapped by factors not fully appreciated in Moscow nor in the Far East theatre. The Russian fleet was divided between two bases, Port Arthur and Vladivostock, 1,200 miles apart and with the Korean peninsula a bared sword between the two. An attempt to join the two major fleet units would involve a transit along the length of the Japanese Islands and the Korean Peninsula where the Japanese fleet would be strongest or a voyage of several thousand miles around the Pacific Ocean side of the Japanese Islands.

The warm water base at Port Arthur had a shallow entrance which permitted transit of capital ships only at high tide.

¹Mairin Mitchell, The Maritime History of Russia 1848-1948, (London: Sidgwick and Jackson 1949), p. 178-179.

These factors were aggravated by the separation of the Pacific fleet from the other Russian fleets by many thousands of miles which eliminated a possibility of rapid reenforcement.

The geographical factors were serious but not in themselves necessarily dominant in determining the outcome of the war. The factor which destined defeat for the Russian fleet was the non-existence of a concept of offensive sea warfare in the minds of the national leaders or the fleet commanders.

Without depreciating the brilliance, courage and performance of Admiral Togo and the Japanese fleet, with these restrictive factors in operation it became a relatively simple task to divide and conquer. The southern fleet which was the stronger of the two was brought to battle and sent reeling to Port Arthur and the protection of the guns of the fort. The Japanese fleet was required to closely ^{guard} the entrance only twice daily during high tide thus it was always at maximum readiness when the Russians could sortie their capital ships. The Russians could not employ surprise and had neither the will nor the strength for a direct confrontation. Eventually the ships at Port Arthur were sunk or scuttled and the crews joined the fort defenders in the land battle. The Vladivostock fleet made half-hearted attempts to reenforce the southern force but

was restricted by ice, a long transit and mines; it was rapidly chewed up by a highly mobile Japanese fleet which always brought to bear a superior force.

Within a few months after hostilities opened in February 1904 the Russian Pacific fleet had ceased to be a cohesive force and by autumn was reduced to small ship operations engaging primarily in mine warfare.

A belated decision was made to send reinforcements from the Baltic Sea. It should be remembered this was a fleet which lay dormant nine months of each year and whose material condition was poor. In September this squadron conducted gunnery practice in the Baltic in preparation for its departure. The results were almost disastrous - everything seemed to go awry; guns exploded, shells burst, ships collided and two cruisers ran hard aground. Finally on October 15, 1904 all of the best ships of the Baltic fleet sailed from Libau for Vladivostock. A transit of 18,000 miles under almost unbelievable conditions lay ahead. Within a few weeks a second contingent of second-rate, slow, obsolete ships sailed from the Baltic to join and further complicate this ill-conceived venture.

The naval authorities of all countries have been obliged to acknowledge that the sending of a fleet to the Far East from the coasts of Russia, and that, without finding en route a single coaling station, without ever being able to take supplies on board at the ports of call, without even being able to go into any docks or naval building yards to make good any

damage arising on the journey, was a grand undertaking, presenting unheardof difficulties, and one without precedent in the history of fleets of war.²

At the end of this tortuous voyage waited a Japanese fleet whose mettle and muscle had been proved; the outcome was not in question, the only issue was where could Admiral Togo make contact. Even this was almost fore-ordained and on May 27 as the Russians limped into the narrowest portion of Tsushima Strait Admiral Togo waited with the "T" crossed. The Russians fought bravely and it required two days for Togo to annihilate this second major Russian fleet.

There remained for the Russians only a handful of decrepid ships in the Baltic and a Black Sea fleet bottled up by the Turkish Sultan at the insistence of the British.

The immediate naval results of the Russian defeat in the Far East was the destruction of the balanced fleet started in 1882, loss of Russian navy bases in the Pacific except for ice-bound Vladivostock and the rise of Japan to a dominant naval position in the Far East. This defeat also added fuel to the fires of discontent in Russia and caused widespread rioting and mutiny of Black Sea fleet personnel during the revolution of 1905.

Captain Klado wrote of the war:

The importance of the command of the sea is a

²Captain N. Klado, Imperial Russian Navy, The Russian Navy in the Russo-Japanese War, (London: Hurst and Blackett Limited 1905), p. 40.

fact now almost universally acknowledged. Unfortunately it was not so at the commencement of this war, and very many then held the opinion that 'we should soon regain the upper-hand on land, and by so doing also regain that which we had lost'. The whole series of our cruel and humiliating losses was necessary to prove how much our Manchurian army had need of the co-operation of our fleet, the defeat of which has entailed such disasters on our land forces.²

Captain Klado's evaluation of the Russian lack of appreciation of control of the sea at the beginning of the war appears quite accurate; however, the statement of universal acknowledgment of its importance after the war was yet to be proven, especially in Russia.

In response to a mixture of cries of vengeance and appreciation by some of the need of a fleet a large scale reconstruction of the navy commenced in 1909. In 1912 this plan was expanded and a sophisticated program for a balanced fleet of advanced design was conceived. Battleships of 32,000 tons with protection and armament years ahead of others, light cruisers of 7,000 tons the value of which were not appreciated by other nations until after World War I, and destroyers unmatched until the British "V" and "W" destroyers were built in 1917-18 were provided for in the 1912 program. The naval leaders had learned the value of mine warfare from the effective Japanese employment in 1904-05 and included the means of denying Russian Baltic waters to the powerful German fleet in their plans.

²Captain Klado, p. 46.

The backward state of Russian industry was unequal to the task of rapid construction of such a fleet. Completion of a battleship required four to five years versus two and one-half years in Germany or Great Britain. Consequently only one new ship was available in 1914 at the commencement of World War I and only a handful by 1917 and the beginning of the revolution. The Baltic fleet, which was to be the recipient of the bulk of the new ships, ranged from primitive to semi-obsolete in 1914.⁴

⁴David Woodward, The Russians at Sea, (London: William Kimber and Company Limited 1965), p. 162.

CHAPTER VII

WORLD WAR I AND THE AFTERMATH 1914-1921

Control of the western Baltic was vital to German industry, especially the ability to obtain iron ore from Sweden. However, only small craft, a few minelayers and an occasional submarine could be committed to the Baltic since the High Seas fleet must maintain a position to counter the British Home fleet. To maintain control of the western Baltic these German naval units were extremely aggressive and mobile.

The Russian Baltic fleet was under the direct orders of the Commanding General of the Northern Russian Army and there was no concept of combined naval and military operations.¹ The Russians conducted a static, unimaginative naval campaign, maintaining a numerically superior but ill-prepared fleet secure in its bases protected by extensive minefields. The only significant offensive operation was a massive and moderately successful mining campaign of attrition against German merchant shipping.

Naval administration was corrupt and inefficient, the state of training was poor and morale extremely low. In November 1915 mutinies occurred on two of the Russian battleships in the Gulf of Finland further reducing the effectiveness of an already ineffective "fleet in being".

¹David Woodward, The Russians at Sea, (London: William Kimber and Company Limited 1965), p. 163

The Black Sea fleet started World War I rather obsolete but better equipped and trained than the Baltic fleet. After the Potemkin mutiny in 1905 an honest effort had been made to revitalize the Black Sea fleet. The German and Turkish fleets sealed the Turkish Straits at the beginning of the war and severed this vital lifeline between Russia and her Allies.

Through effective use of mines and a somewhat more aggressive use of the fleet than was evidenced in the Baltic the Russians were able to maintain general control of the Black Sea but could not eliminate the new, fast German cruisers which always slipped through the Dardanelles if menaced by the guns of the Russian battleships.

The Allies' Dardanelles or Gallipoli scheme was the only serious attempt to open the Straits. This project did not have whole-hearted Russian government support because of the feeling that Constantinople could be retained by Russia after the war only if Russia captured it alone.

The Russian Pacific fleet was a mere shadow at the beginning of World War I and this shadow quickly evaporated before the onslaught of modern German cruisers.

Employment of the Russian fleet in World War I again demonstrated a lack of appreciation of the significance of control of the sea until it was irrevocably lost to the enemy and again showed a deep reluctance to risk loss of

fleet units. In spite of the many problems that beset the Russian fleet a commitment to worthwhile action would have caused a serious weakening of German strength.

The Russian navy ceased to exist on January 2, 1918 and the Soviet navy was henceforth until 1947 to be known as "Red Fleet".² It was not a very impressive force; World War I losses, revolutionary activity of navy personnel, scuttling of ships, internment, and capture had practically destroyed it physically and as an entity. Additional loss of ships was incurred in the Baltic in actions against the British during the "War of Intervention".

The end of the Civil War in 1921 saw only a few ships in existence and those in a deplorable material state and manned by a skeleton force of malcontents whose loyalties were rent by politics.

²David Woodward, p. 187.

CHAPTER VIII

REVIVING THE RED FLEET 1922-1941

Several thousand Komsomols, Young Communists, were sent to navy schools starting in 1922 to provide a trained cadre of politically reliable personnel in rebuilding the fleet. The most advanced in construction of the ships laid down under the Czarist regime in the period 1912-17 were completed and several of the ships remaining from the World War I fleet were refurbished to give the Soviets a semblance of a fleet. It was not a lack of ambition that prevented the Soviet leaders from launching a construction program until 1933 but a recognition of the practical limitations of a regime hard-pressed to stay in power, a country practically destroyed by external and internal strife and an economy some 50 years behind Europe as a whole. At the 1924 conference in Rome of States not included in the 1922 Major Naval Powers conference the Soviet leaders demanded a capital ship tonnage of 490,000, nearly equal to the United States and British tonnage. At that time the USSR had three capital ships of 70,000 tons total and did not lay down a new capital ship for another 14 years.¹

The stirring of naval ambitions became evident in 1929 with visits of Soviet warships to foreign ports, Italy

¹David Woodward, The Russians at Sea, (London: William Kimber and Company Limited 1965), p. 201-202.

and Germany, for the first time in 16 years. In the same year the USSR started construction of several "S" class submarines on plans obtained from Germany.

French and Italian naval architects and shipbuilders were engaged in 1933 to assist in developing plans for a modern Soviet fleet. In 1935 this program was implemented and consisted primarily of cruisers, destroyers, submarines, motor torpedo boats and mine warfare craft. The construction program and official Soviet statements indicated a naval concept of commerce raiding and coastal defense fleets.

The Spanish Civil War 1936-37 provided a shock for Stalin - he could not lend effective aid to the Republicans because his fleet could not control the Mediterranean. Germany and Italy were assisting Franco and could deny use of the sea to the USSR. Stalin then recognized that control of the sea required a balanced fleet and immediately embarked on construction of battleships and large cruisers to counter the German pocket-battleships. World War II came before this capital ship construction program bore any fruit. He did not make an effort to build aircraft carriers since he considered land-based air power adequate for operations in the Baltic, Black and Mediterranean.² Although Stalin appreciated the need for a balanced fleet he had no concept of worldwide sea power, his concern was for control

²David Woodward, p. 204.

of those European seas considered essential to support the Soviet army. The fleet was a supporting arm and defensive force.

The failure of the construction programs of 1933-38 to provide adequate and suitable ships was to seriously limit Soviet naval operations in World War II; however, an event of this same period was to have even more disastrous results. The purges of 1937-38 deprived the Red Fleet of most of its experienced senior officers. World War II started with officers with no deep-sea experience, no long cruises under their belts and no feeling of being at home on the sea, this was particularly true among the flag officers.³

³David Woodward, p. 206-208.

CHAPTER IX

RED FLEET OPERATIONS IN WORLD WAR II

Soviet Union naval strength at the beginning of World War II is hard to confirm because of the cloak of secrecy drawn over ship construction in the 30s. It is generally agreed that the Baltic fleet was a defensive and raiding fleet consisting of roughly 100 submarines, 100 motor torpedo boats, 40 destroyers with only two old battleships and two modern cruisers providing heavy firepower. In spite of being heavily committed against the British fleet the Germans in June 1941, simultaneously as the army marched into the Soviet Union, mined the entrance of the Gulf of Finland, laid a line of mines east from Oland and persuaded Sweden to mine between the Swedish coast and Oland. This bottled up Soviet surface units and discouraged them from seriously venturing into the Baltic throughout the war.

The Black Sea fleet had one old battleship, six cruisers, four ^{of} which were obsolete, about 50 submarines and 30 destroyers and torpedo boats. To oppose this force the axis powers had four Rumanian destroyers and one big, clumsy Rumanian submarine. Again a judicious use of mines by the Germans, laid by aircraft, bottled up 17 of the Soviet submarines in Sevastopol.

The Soviet Black Sea fleet did yeoman service in supporting and supplying Odessa, Sevastopol and Novorossik

during the German siege of each and evacuated personnel when each fell.

The Germans brought an array of small craft and submarines to the Black Sea via canals, rivers and roads in a manner reminiscent of the first Russian fleet in the Black in 1695. In this manner Germany took command of the western portion of the Black Sea from an overwhelming stronger force.¹

In spite of losing its major bases in the Black the Soviet fleet was able to maintain some mobility and avoid being trapped in port as at Port Arthur in 1904 or in the Baltic in 1941.²

The Northern or White Sea fleet was a minor unit at the commencement of hostilities with only about 40 submarines and a dozen destroyers. This quickly developed into a vital area as it was the only ocean supply line open to the Allies and was essential for support of the Soviet Union. The Soviet fleet could contribute little to protecting this lifeline; the submarines had few targets since the principal attackers were U-boats and the Luftwaffe. The destroyers were of Italian type built for the warm, placid Mediterranean

¹David Woodward, The Russians at Sea, (London: William Kimber and Company Limited 1965), p. 215-219.

²Mairen Mitchell, The Maritime History of Russia 1848-1948, (London: Sidgwick and Jackson Limited 1949), p. 409-411.

and unsuited for Arctic operations. This fleet was strengthened in 1944 by transfer of a British battleship, a United States cruiser and nine British lend-lease destroyers. Nonetheless the task of escorting convoys to Murmansk continued to fall primarily on non-Soviet ships.

The Pacific fleet participated only during the one week war against beaten Japan in conducting amphibious operations against the Kurile Islands.³

The Soviets made extravagant claims for Red Fleet accomplishments in World War II, by 1 July 1944 it was claimed the Baltic fleet had sunk 1,666 enemy ships and destroyed 5,308 aircraft while the Northern fleet had sunk 500 German transports and shot down 1,000 aircraft. These figures cannot be substantiated by other Allies' records and in fact credit can only be established for the smallest fraction of these kills.⁴ Woodward writes, ". . . for example, the claim that Russian submarines sank 1,500,000 tons of shipping in all theatres of war although the actual figure was less than 300,000 tons".⁵

As had been evidenced in previous wars the Soviets were extremely reluctant to commit heavy units to action,

³David Woodward, p. 225-226.

⁴Mairen Mitchell, p. 376, 385.

⁵David Woodward, p. 224.

it was only light units such as MTBs which were considered expendable. In both the Baltic and Black Soviet numerical superiority was not exploited and the enemy was in command of the bulk of these waters during most of the conflict. As had often been true in the past the Russians had overwhelming stronger naval forces, brave seamen, some good ships - and little idea of how to use them!⁶ This was most disappointing for a navy just regaining its strength and position after the revolution and civil war.

⁶David Woodward, p. 226.

CHAPTER X

THE SOVIET FLEET TODAY

The close of hostilities in 1945 found the Red Fleet weak, obsolete and rather discouraged by unimpressive results in the war. It had two or three cruisers, 20 to 30 destroyers and about 100 submarines.

The war had left the Soviet Union with 50% of its resources devastated and war casualties in the millions.

In the immediate post-war years the Soviet leaders successfully embarked on programs to maintain and modernize massive armies and air forces, develop a major nuclear weapons capability and venture far into space. Simultaneously the Soviet leaders launched a fleet building project unparalleled in peacetime - four major fleets almost completely equipped with new ships!¹

Lacking advanced design and construction know-how the Soviets borrowed heavily from captured German warships and utilized German technical skills in all areas of construction.

Admiral Kuznetsov, who as Pacific Fleet Commander was the only Fleet Commander to survive the 1937-38 purges, was charged with rejuvenating the navy. He rushed to completion several Sverdlov class cruisers since this was a readily available design based on pre-war work by Italian naval

¹David Woodward, The Russians at Sea, (London: William Kimber and Company Limited 1965), p. 226-229.

architects. In this way the Admiral could get the navy to sea quickly, train personnel, boost morale and establish a naval image in the world.²

By 1957, only 12 years after cessation of hostilities, the Soviet fleet was second only to the United States - an effort requiring an outlay of men, materials and technical resources unknown previously except during wartime.

The Soviet fleet today consists of 23 cruisers, 130 destroyers, 30 nuclear powered submarines, 400 conventional powered submarines, 90 frigates, 900 minesweepers, 245 escort and patrol vessels, 350 MTB, 550 gunboats and fast patrol boats, 120 coastal landing craft and 200 auxiliaries. All of the cruisers, destroyers, attack submarines as well as the minecraft are fitted to carry mines.³ As can be readily seen this is a fleet designed for two purposes; attrition of a maritime foe and protection of the coasts of the Soviet Union, a raiding and defensive force.

Soviet warships are ranging far and wide today and are encountered in practically every sea and ocean of the world. These activities grow each year and provide an impression of "worldwide" sea power.

"Not until World War II did the 'land animal' fully

²David Woodward, p. 229.

³Jane's Fighting Ships 1964-65, (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company 1965), p. 424-445.

understand the value of sea power when the Germans advanced to the Crimea, took the Ukraine and Russia became dependent upon the United States and Britain for supplies which could only be delivered by sea."⁴

"Today Russia is conscious of her future as a maritime Power, and the country that could once be correctly called a land animal is now becoming so sea-minded that there is a tendency abroad to forget that she has not always been thus."⁵

⁴Mairen Mitchell, The Maritime History of Russia 1848-1948, (London: Sidgwick and Jackson Limited 1949), p. 329.

⁵Mairen Mitchell, p. 323.

PART III

SOVIET COMMERCIAL INTEREST AT SEA

A leading British historian, Brian Tunstall, wrote at the end of World War II; "The future of the world depends more than it ever did in the past on ocean trade, and when once the restrictions created by the war have been removed, ocean trade will be the symbol of the world's political and economic convalescence."¹

All evidence indicates the Soviet leaders have learned well the lesson enunciated by Professor Tunstall.

¹Tunstall quoted in Mairén Mitchell, The Maritime History of Russia 1848-1948, (London: Sidgwick and Jackson Limited 1949), p. 347.

CHAPTER XI

MERCANTILE EFFORT PRIOR 1921

The nature of the Russian economy, the vast land resources of the nation and the temperament of the people did not encourage early development of a merchant fleet. It was not until the early years of the 19th century that a school was established to train masters and pilots and the middle of the century when the Steam Shipping and Trading Company was formed to construct docks and harbors. The Russian merchant navy became an organized institution in 1876 in an effort to improve Russian mercantile position and consisted of naval auxiliaries and auxiliary cruisers. At the beginning of the Russo-Japanese War in 1904 there were only 25 ships in the merchant navy, most of these were engaged on runs from Odessa or St. Petersburg in Europe to Vladivostok or Port Arthur in the Pacific, this effort directly supported the military effort in the Pacific. At this time British bottoms carried 75% of Russian imports which totaled only about three million tons annually.¹

World War I, the War of Intervention and the Civil War destroyed the Russian merchant navy and much of the Russian privately owned merchant shipping, leaving the Soviet leaders with only a memory from the War of Intervention

¹Mairen Mitchell, The Maritime History of Russia 1848-1948, (London: Sidgwick and Jackson Limited 1949), p. 341.

of how disastrous a complete blockade could be. Great Britain had again demonstrated that even the "land animal" can be strangled by an effective sea blockade. This lesson was not lost on the Soviet leaders although there was not to be an opportunity to take advantage of the lesson for a considerable period.

CHAPTER XII

SOVIET SHIPPING 1922-1945

A limited effort to rebuild a merchant navy commenced in 1922, this included nationalization of all private ships and shipping facilities. Merchant shipping rocked along in a minor role for over 10 years with little expansion, somewhat because of confusion and disorganization but primarily due to the Soviet policy, rather rigidly enforced, of maximum home consumption of USSR produced goods.¹

In 1927 Soviet ships carried less cargo tonnage than in 1913 and in 1931 Soviet ships still carried only 4% of USSR exports.²

During the economic depression of the 1930s the USSR bought a large number of merchant ships very cheaply and in 1937 was lifting 50% of its exports. Just prior to World War II the Soviet share in the world's international trade was only about 1% of the total.³

In spite of considerable merchant ship losses in World War II the Soviets through lend-lease ships from the United States was able to maintain a sea left capacity comparable to that existing in 1941. With the acquisition of one-third

¹Mairen Mitchell, The Maritime History of Russia 1848-1948, (London: Sidgwick and Jackson Limited 1949), p. 346.

²Mairen Mitchell, p. 346.

³Mairen Mitchell, p. 347.

of the German merchant fleet at the end of World War II the total amounted to two million tons in 1947. However, the bulk of Soviet merchant ships at this time were slow, obsolete and inefficient.⁴

In addition to gaining considerable shipping tonnage the Soviets had by the end of World War II acquired the entire eastern coast of the Baltic from Viborg, gained from Finland in 1940, to Kaliningrad on the Bay of Danzig. Along this coast are numerous good harbors and shipbuilding yards.

⁴Mairen Mitchell, p. 347.

CHAPTER XIII

POST WAR MERCHANT FLEET

From 1947 until Stalins death in 1953 little change occurred in the Soviet merchant fleet. In the next five years the number of ships and tonnage increased roughly 75%. Between 1958 and 1963 the number of ships increased 55% while the tonnage doubled. Thus in a ten year period the Soviet merchant fleet jumped from about two million to seven million tons. In 1963 the USSR acquired 112 new merchant ships, this is a rate of increase in excess of that required to reach the stated goal of ten million tons in 1970.¹ By contrast United States tonnage in 1963 was about twelve million with a 1970 projected figure of ten million.²

A vast amount of this new tonnage has been tankers with the result that the USSR has a large, modern tanker fleet providing cut-rate competition in the world petroleum market. Many of the dry cargo ships are old and slow; however, the trend in recent years has been toward bigger ships with improved cargo handling facilities. This trend

¹The Growing Strength of the Soviet Merchant Fleet, Legislative Reference Service, The Library of Congress, (U. S. Government Printing Office 1964), p. 1.

²Russia's Burgeoning Maritime Strength, Staff Study for the Subcommittee to Investigate the Administration of the Internal Security Laws of the Committee on the Judiciary, United States Senate, (U. S. Government Printing Office), p. 1.

is shown not only by the Soviet ships which have appeared in world trade in recent years but also by the foreign orders placed for dry cargo construction. At the end of 1962 orders for 80 such were outstanding. In recent years the USSR has put into service a number of "prestige" passenger liners. These are engaged in Black Sea-Mediterranean cruises, the Scandanivan run and a regular London-Leningrad run.

A few years ago the Soviet Union was a minor maritime nation and there has been no radical alteration in her economy to necessitate the acquisition of a large merchant fleet. "The official line is a desire to obtain Western currency for trading purposes, but it seems clear that the real intention is the undermining of the trading strength of the West and of Britain in particular."³

"It would seem that as far as the Soviet Union is concerned, this country has seemingly, and perhaps reluctantly acquiesced to the proposition that their world-wide influence can best be achieved by economic and ideological means. It is quite apparent that the Soviet Union is building a large maritime fleet in furtherance of this aim."⁴

³Vice Admiral B. B. Schofield, B.B., C.B.E., "Maritime Affairs". Army, March 1963, p. 14-15.

⁴R. E. Walters, The Soviet Union and the Arctic Ocean, (Annapolis, Academic Fellowship 1965), p. 2.

CHAPTER XIV

SOVIET FISHING INDUSTRY

For several generations fish has been an important item in the diet of the people of the Soviet Union. The sources of fish until recent years were the inland seas and lakes and the shallow coastal areas. The fishing industry although owned and controlled by the government of the USSR was not well organized nor adequately financed. The end of World War II found Soviet fishing primarily limited to impoverished grounds in inland and shallow waters. The take in 1945 was just over one million tons.

Since that time, and primarily since 1950, the Soviet fishing fleet has undergone a complete modernization and its concept of operations has been wholly revised. It is now equipped with all the types of ships necessary to fish in every ocean of the world and is doing just that. There are floating canneries of 15,000 tons gross weight, large refrigerated trawlers, floating reduction plants to process scrap fish for oil and meal, crab canneries, whale factory ships, freezer ships, transport ships and many others; all modern and well organized. No longer is the Soviet fishing industry restricted to local waters nor seriously affected by seasonal fluctuations.¹

¹Legislative Reference Service, The Library of Congress, The Postwar Expansion of Russia's Fishing Industry, (U. S. Government Printing Office 1964), p. 37.

In 1960 the catch was three and one-half million tons and the planned take in 1965 was to rise to five million tons. Between 1955 and 1961 the USSR tripled its export of fish and fish products and reduced its import of these products by 60%.²

To support the fishing industry the Soviet Union operates 19 Research Institutes of Fishery and Oceanology. Highly qualified personnel working in fishery research and pisciculture increased from 1,427 in 1939 to 21,400 in 1959.³

The stated and apparent objective of the USSR is to achieve supremacy among fishing nations of the world and to fish every prime fishing ground in the world. The Soviet fish take has surpassed that of the United States since 1960 and huge fleets of Soviet fishermen operate routinely in the fishing banks off the coasts of North America and are crowding the dwindling United States fishing fleet out of its own home waters.⁴

²Legislative Reference Service, The Library of Congress, The Postwar Expansion of Russia's Fishing Industry, (U. S. Government Printing Office 1964), p. 26

³Legislative Reference Service, The Library of Congress, The Postwar Expansion of Russia's Fishing Industry, (U. S. Government Printing Office 1964), p. 28.

⁴Legislative Reference Service, The Library of Congress, The Postwar Expansion of Russia's Fishing Industry, (U. S. Government Printing Office 1964), p. 40.

CHAPTER XV

SOVIET OCEANOGRAPHY

Exploitation of sea power in naval operations, world trade and a vast fishing effort requires extensive knowledge of the ocean environment. This requisite knowledge is being gained by Soviet oceanographers in a program unparalleled in the world. Captain Treadwell, United States Navy, who spent a month in 1964 looking over Soviet oceanographic facilities says:

Oceanography in the Soviet Union has come from very nearly zero to its present high level very quickly. There is every reason to believe that this rate of growth will continue, and that existing faults will be recognized and overcome. It can be said that the Soviet capability for the routine collection and publication of data is the best in the world.

The Soviet navy has about 500 hydrographic officers and there are some 800 civilian scientists, technicians and research specialists engaged in oceanography. The oceanographic fleet is the world's largest with 145 ships; 30 basic research, 20 applied research, 55 regular surveying ships and 40 fishery research craft.²

The Soviet effort in oceanography is not only massive, it is of high caliber and is designed to establish and

¹Treadwell, T. K. Jr., Captain, United States Navy. "Soviet Oceanography Today." U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings, May 1965, p. 37.

²Foss, William O., "Soviet Oceanography." Navy, October 1962, p. 16.

demonstrate world leadership in the field of oceanography.³

³Foss, William O., p. 18.

CHAPTER XVI

CONCLUSIONS

The land animal - Russia - has come a long way toward becoming a sea creature or at least amphibious. This in spite of severe limitations in the elements considered essential for sea power.

Historically the Russian and Soviet leaders have displayed a lack of appreciation of the role of sea power in world affairs. However, in the post World War II era Soviet leaders have not only displayed a much better understanding of the meaning of total sea power but a remarkable tenacity and determination in establishing a total sea power position. Presently there is only one serious flaw in the picture of Soviet sea power - the navy is not designed to control the sea, it is a raiding and defensive force; therefore, the Soviets cannot project a major portion of their power across the ocean in war.

The United States is the only nation now capable of maintaining a stronger sea power position than the Soviet Union. The United States will continue to maintain a navy strong enough to deny the use of the sea to the Soviet Union in war; however, a dramatic reversal of policy will be required to prevent the continued erosion of United States total sea power position through neglect of its' merchant marine in world trade, its' fishing fleet's steady

deterioration, and a niggardly effort in exploration of the ocean environment. While expending billions to maintain the capability to control the sea in war the United States can lose control of the sea to the Soviet Union in peacetime.

Continuation of present policies in the Soviet Union and in the United States will bring the emergence by 1985 of the Soviet Union as a major sea power to rival the United States as the dominant sea power of the world.

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